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THE STATE OF THE GAY AT HARDING UNIVERSITY faith. learning. living.

DEAR HARDING,

Hello to all students, faculty, administration, staff, alumni, and the beloved donors of Harding University. We are the HU Queer Press, and we are presenting our first-ever publication. This zine is a self-published work intended to bring attention to the lives and issues of demoralized minorities. Writing a zine is an act of social liberation. We heretics, dissidents and marginalized citizens are far enough outside of the mainstream to be prohibited inclusion in more traditional media, so we opted to circumvent those mediums and create our own. Since the invention of the printing press, leaflets and pamphlets were used in political and social revolutions, like Thomas Paine's "Common Sense." We are here to share with you our struggle. We are here to be a voice for the voiceless who are quietly dying inside the walls of our campus. We want you to know us. We are your friends, co-workers, students, family members, fellow worshippers, professors, athletes, and scholars. We are that guy who you see running on the track or that quiet book worm, that girl doing her hair or that softball butch. We have gone with you to social club functions, and you sit next to us in class. We are your roommates and the best friend to whom you tell your every secret. We are queer. We are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. While the rest of you fall in love with the opposite sex, we share our lives and beds with those of our own gender. All is not well for us at Harding. Our voices are muted, our stories go unheard, and we are forced into hiding. We are threatened with re-orientation therapy, social isolation, and expulsion. We are told stories and lies that we are disgusting sinners who are damned to hell, that we are broken individuals and child abusers. We are told we will live miserable lives and are responsible for the collapse of civilization. We have lost our friends and families, been kicked out of our churches and school, and are killed, or when left with no option, kill ourselves. We have felt the pain of the deep, dark closet, and we are here to announce that we will not stand for it any longer. This is simply not acceptable. We are good people who are finished being treated as second-class citizens at Harding. We have done nothing wrong and we did not choose this suppression. We are children of God and valuable assets to this campus and the world beyond. We are not asking anything from you. We are here to tell you that we exist and will not be silenced.

"I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries for liberation from their harsh oppressors. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come to rescue them."

— Exodus 3:7-8

Congratulations! You made it to the end. We thank you for the time you spent on our ramblings and hope you enjoyed reading.

While we know that it is impossible to change the world overnight, we hope that our first step will encourage you to do the same. We hope you will begin to think critically about the things you are told about homosexuality. We hope that Harding will realize the need for a safe and open space for LGBTQ students. We hope that you will think twice before saying words that are damaging to others.

At the very least, we hope that we have given human voices to the queer community. We hope that these human voices will garner respect from those who don't agree with us.

In return for your time spent reading this, we are more than happy to give you ours. Contact us at Huqueerpress@gmail.com

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What lifestyle? I'm just living.

I'm just not attracted to men. I tried to change that, but I couldn't. I tried to pray it away, but it didn't go anywhere. I was never molested. I came from a perfectly normal Christian home. You cannot help me get through some trauma and expect me to magically love a man.

But this is what the church wants. If you don't seek help (and sometimes even if you do) you may be abandoned by friends, family, church, even employers or school administrators. Why would anyone choose such a life? Answer: they wouldn't. We don't. If there were any way for me to change this one thing about myself that everyone around here seems to find so disgusting, I would have done it. I know my queer friends would cringe to read such a homophobic statement from a homo, but it was true. It's not anymore, but it was. I'd heard my parents make little remarks about the "gay agenda" and its "attack on marriage". In fact, I can't think of more than a handful of people I love who haven't said such things, or worse. I didn't choose to be gay, I just am. This is no lifestyle. I live just like many of you. The fact is, if my mere existence somehow affects your faith or your marriage, you must have a pretty weak faith and a ridiculous marriage. If my future loving, committed relationship somehow weakens you, you are already quite weak. No law will change the fact that I'm gay and no law will save your faith or your marriage. Neither will condemnation or even therapy. I just am the way I am.

--C--

**the
experience**

"Straight Americans need... an education of the heart and soul. They must understand - to begin with - how it can feel to spend years denying your own deepest truths, to sit silently through classes, meals, and church services while people you love toss off remarks that brutalize your soul."

--Bruce Bawer, The Advocate, 28 April 1998



HOW I REALIZED I LIKE GIRLS. (AND WHY I'M SURPRISED I DIDN'T REALIZE SOONER.)

I did get to kiss her. Several times, actually, at my 16th birthday party after everyone else had fallen asleep. It was beautiful.

I wrote her a love letter the next day, explaining how I'd felt about her the past couple of the years.

But my family moved away that summer, so nothing came of it.

I decided the new town would be a fresh start. I never told anyone about Elle or that I thought I might be a lesbian. I faked crushes to feel included when my friends started talking about such things, but mostly I completely ignored any sexual aspect of myself. Being a devout Christian made it easy to pass off my

When I was 13, I, like most every girl my age, had a best friend (we'll call her Elle.) We spent almost all of our free time together, wrote several-page-long notes to each other that we passed when we met in the school halls, wrote stories about what our lives would be like when we grew up. We loved all the same movies, all the same books, and some of the same music.

I'd never thought that I might be a lesbian. I heard people in church talk about the dangers of the GAY AGENDA and knew several people who were part of the boycott against Disney for their support of homosexuality, but I'd never known any gay people or seen them on TV or read about them in books. They were like these mythological creatures who ran amok in far lands causing all manner of sinful, AIDS-ridden chaos.

I began to realize, though, that every time Elle had a boyfriend (and she had A LOT of them,) I got immensely jealous. Even if he was someone who had always been a good mutual friend, I would begin to resent him. It wasn't just that Elle was spending less time with me, or that I felt left out. I wanted to hold her hand like they did. I wanted her to look at me the way she looked at them. I wanted to kiss her goodbye when we all left at the end of the school day.

WHY DO THEY HAVE TO SHOVE IT DOWN OUR THROATS ALL THE TIME?

Let's be honest, reader. You've probably heard someone say something to the effect of "Why do they always have to push their gay agenda so loudly?" You may even be the kind of person who'll say that about this very zine.

The idea of shoving an idea down someone's throat is pretty graphic. It's almost rape-like. It reminds me of a scene from some sci-fi movie where the evil side is force-feeding the good guy a mind-controlling slug so that he'll tell the truth. What this would suggest is that we're always in situations where we have to fight the other side to the death so that we don't spew out the same nonsense they are. But truthfully, I don't usually feel that's the case when people say that. Usually, they're just hearing (not in a conversation about, just hearing) an idea that they disagree with.

People disagree about virtually everything. No topic is safe, be it the way a country should be run or the best combination of pizza toppings. The problem is that we don't flip out when we see a stranger eating a pear and gorgonzola pizza. But, if we see a gay couple walking down a street holding hands, or (for maybe a more relevant-to-Searcy example) watch an episode of *Glee*...? Well. I'll say that I've heard some Christians say that most ungodly things.

And the reason we don't flip out for the former is that the stranger isn't saying his combination is "right." There is no "right" or "wrong" when it comes to pizza. Pizza is, quite thankfully, out of the moral equation. Unfortunately, the idea of sexuality isn't.

We know you don't see the LGBTQ community as something about which you can have an opinion. But we want you to know that it isn't something that we can change. Most of us have spent years trying to beat pray ourselves into heterosexuality, or at the very least, asexuality. And after years of trying to change and hating ourselves for not being able to, we've come to accept it, and to even love it.

Our goal is to help you understand that our sexuality is as insignificant as our pizza toppings; we are in no way trying to force anything upon you. I like men. I also like pizzas topped with black olives, spinach, and heart of palm. I'm not trying to make a statement when I'm with either. I'm just being me.

-P

LIVING

I don't
struggle with
same-sex
attraction

**THE GAY
LIFESTYLE**
Do the laundry, pay bills, go to work, put gas in the car, buy groceries, read the paper, take Mom out to lunch, clean the cat box, watch TV, go to church, vacuum, dust, take the dog to the vet, get stuck in traffic, go to the beach, see a movie, cook dinner, load the dishwasher, enjoy the sunset, mow the lawn...

I don't
practice
homosexuality

I was born good at it!

With this brief commentary, we hope to demonstrate that being gay is just that: being. It's not a choice, and our "lifestyle" isn't any different than that of your average heterosexual. It's simply a life like any other — one we're given and hope to make the most of.

disinterest in boys as wanting to avoid temptation because I was saving myself for marriage.

I spent a lot of time being angry at God for whatever had made me like girls, and a lot of time being angry at myself for being unable to change that. Through a long process that I don't have room for here, I eventually came to accept myself as a lesbian and got up the courage to come out to my friends and (most) family a couple of years ago. I'm much happier and far more confident in myself as an out lesbian than I ever was while trying to be straight.

I'm not your stereotypical lesbian. I love dresses and pink and Jane Austen. I don't hate men, nor am I afraid of them. I think sports are the most boring thing on the face of the planet.

Looking back, I think it's funny that I didn't start wondering about myself sooner. When I was young, my favorite part of my favorite movie (Disney's *Peter Pan*) was when they visited the mermaids because I thought they were so beautiful. I always obsessed over female characters in movies the way my friends obsessed over N*Sync members. I always stared too long at the pictures of women on the covers of magazines in the grocery store, though I always thought it was out of curiosity about what my own body would become someday.

So I don't remember ever choosing to like girls. It's just how things always were. It's what felt natural. It wasn't until I was told that it was wrong that I felt like I should be different.

I was lucky that while I was at Harding I had friends and roommates who were open-minded and didn't care at all when I came out. It didn't change anything about the friendships I already had. I'm lucky that I have a mom and sisters who still consider me family (though I'm worried about how my dad will react, and my brothers are too young right now.) I know not everyone is as fortunate as I am in that.

My hope is that Harding will become a place where everyone is able to have the love and support that I did. I hope that someday people will be accepted as they are and not expected to change or deny themselves of happiness. Harding has started taking those steps, and I hope they'll continue to progress in a direction that will benefit all students.

You are beautiful as you are.
You can be happy as you are.
You can be loved as you are.

Devery

I'm just me

Who am I? I'm a daughter, a friend, a sister, a girl, a woman, a human being, a lover of art, of peace, of compassion, a Christ follower...oh yeah, and I'm gay. What does that mean? Really it means that I'm no different than anyone else. At least not more different than anyone else. It means that I hope to meet a woman someday who will laugh with me, cry with me, grow with me, build a family with me, and love me unconditionally for the rest of our lives. But that's not what my life is all about. I want to give back. I want to love people and to help people love themselves and love others. I'm no different from anyone else.

Unfortunately it took me years to realize that. Years of thinking I was disgusting, weird, stupid. Years of wondering why I couldn't just be like everyone else. Isn't that funny? Who wants to be just like everyone else? And how can I be just like everyone else when people are so different? I finally understood that I was not this

"homosexual" that was being condemned from every pulpit, street corner and living room couch in the Bible Belt. I'm no prostitute and I've certainly never tried to rape any angels—or anyone else for that matter. The things taught to us by old, straight men are a complete misunderstanding of the queer world. There's as much (or more) diversity in the LGBT community as there is anywhere else. Every race, gender, political party and religion has its gay members. From those dancing naked in the street at Pride, to the pastor in the community church, to the Muslim imam down the road.

Conservative, liberal, Buddhist, Mormon, Hindu—you name it. And yeah, we queer folk like sex just as much as the next straight person,

But What About Integrity?

Odds are, if you've been at Harding for a while, you know about Integrity Ministries—Harding's attempt to reach out to students who "struggle with same-gender attraction."

While it's good that HU is acknowledging this population of students, there are several problems that HU Queers have with it.

1) The phrase "struggle with same-sex attraction." Many of us are happy and confident in our queerness. It's not something we consider a struggle and we aren't afraid to call ourselves gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, or queer.

2) The view of queer as broken. I don't feel broken. I don't come from a "broken" family. I don't feel ashamed of myself. I don't think I would have a better or happier life if I was straight.

3) Not all LGBTQ-folk have been abused or rejected at some point in their lives. We come from wonderful families, had normal childhoods and probably grew up moving we were queer from a young age.



Harding needs a group that is inclusive of all LGBTQ people. We need to allow all LGBTQ people to have a voice and the freedom to be honest about who they are. Until this happens, Harding will not be safe for all its students *Queers*

STAND UP SPEAK OUT

Queers need safe spaces to exist and thrive, too!

It took me about a full year before coming out to anyone at Harding. It was my best friend at the time and the person I ended up living with the following year. He was incredibly receptive and supportive—didn't question if I was *actually* gay, didn't pull out his bible, wasn't scared I was trying to get in his pants, etc. Overall, a great experience. Eventually I came out to 2 or 3 others, all had similar reactions and were supportive. I was even somewhat out to a professor in my department—they were wonderful, never feeling the need to intervene and fix me but rather assumed I could handle things just fine on my own.

These people and these spaces of security were crucial for me and I know they're crucial for other lgbt folks. Without these (with the exception of my therapist) I would have gone way more insane than I already did at Harding. All this to say, I'm confident that there are many more people than one would think at Harding who have a critical view of sexuality and who are/would be supportive of queer classmates. This goes against what one might think in terms of the religious and political climate of Harding but I think it's true.

So, if you're one of these people who can actively support, encourage, and listen to a gay or lesbian friend, do that! Actively create supportive and safe environments for individuals on your campus who are terrified of coming out because they fear rejection from a crazy, religious right. Prove them/us wrong. I know you're out there. Be vocal. Speak up in class and question the anti-gay teachings and comments that happen so regularly. Tell that person down the hall in your dorm that "fagot" isn't a funny word. Speak up and befriend that one bullied kid in your dorm. Before we can come out and feel safe and supported we need YOU to come out and provide us the safe, loving space to do that. —K

but we aren't and shouldn't be defined by sexuality. My life is about way more than that.

So finally I began to accept all of this and knew I needed to talk to someone. I told some people I knew would still love me afterward. The funny thing is, even though I knew they would still love me, it took two hours of meaningless talk to be able to say it out loud. Most of the people I first told just kind of smiled and said "I figured." And of course they still loved me. Soon I had this great group of people encouraging me. I got enough confidence to finally tell my parents. They, too, already had some idea that this might be coming, but there was no smile on their face when they said so. "We were afraid of this." "I'm very disappointed." I still can't figure out why in the world they are disappointed. I haven't done anything wrong. Unless honesty is wrong. Thankfully the initial conversation (if you could call it that) was not the end. I think that we're closer because of my honesty, actually. I'm blessed enough to have parents who may not understand everything, but are willing to try. I wish everyone were so fortunate.

--C--

TOXIC TEACHINGS: REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF ANTI-GAY DOGMA WITHIN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST AND HARDING

(THE FOLLOWING ARE ENTRIES FROM MY PERSONAL JOURNAL FROM WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND AT HARDING AND ALSO EXCERPTS FROM A CURRENT HARDING COURSE PACKET DESIGNED WRITTEN BY PROFESSOR JOE BRUMFIELD-FOLLOWED BY MY COMMENTARY)

Regarding conversations with my youth minister in high school after being baptized. January 18, 2006

HE SAID I SHOULD BE HOPING FOR THE DAY WHEN I AM ATTRACTED TO WOMEN AND CAN FURTHER PURSUE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM. I BELIEVE HE'S RIGHT, BUT IT'S VERY FRUSTRATING RIGHT NOW, DESIRING AND HOPING FOR THESE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FUTURE BUT NOT EXPERIENCING SIGNS OF MOVING COMPLETELY IN THAT DIRECTION. BASICALLY, I DON'T WANT TO BE LONELY ALL OF MY LIFE.

Notes after therapy session at Harding. October 24, 2006

I NEED TO MAKE THIS DECISION WILL I GO THROUGH WITH THIS OR NOT. IF SO I NEED TO TRULY COUNT THE COST AND REALIZE THAT THIS WILL COST ME. IF YES, THAT I FOR SURE WANT TO PURSUE MY LIFE AS A GODLY PERSON WITH HIM ABOVE ALL ELSE:

-I WOULD HAVE TO SEE MYSELF AS HETEROSEXUAL

-EVERY TIME I AM ATTRACTED OR WANT TO LOOK AT ANOTHER GUY I WOULD HAVE TO SAY

"NO. I AM A HETEROSEXUAL AND I DO NOT HAVE THESE DESIRES, THEY ARE NOT NATURAL." I WOULD COMPLETELY HAVE TO CAPTURE MY THOUGHTS, DENY THEM, AND NEVER INTEND TO PURSUE OR CONTINUE THESE THOUGHTS

Excerpts from Dr. Joe Brumfield's Christian Home course packet "Help For Relationships: Mate selection, marriage, family building, and counseling" Expanded 2011 Edition (HAHAHA LOL)

PAGES 118-121, SECTION TITLED "HOMOSEXUALITY: HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED"

IT IS POSSIBLE IN MANY OR MOST CASES TO PREVENT HOMOSEXUALITY

- DEVELOPMENTAL GAPS IN PARENT CHILD RELATIONSHIP ARE SEEN
- A CHILD WHO IS SECURE IN THEIR GENDER IDENTITY GIVES BEST ASSURANCE OF HETEROSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT LATER
- DEVELOPMENTAL ROOTS OF HOMOSEXUALITY TYPICALLY:

only one "explanation" given for a child being gay: a poor relationship with his father. There is only one line dedicated to lesbians. This does not apply to me at all. So no, I do not feel "safe" in the typical Harding environment. I feel disregarded, written off

Well, forget safety, I want to breathe! I want a full life, without worrying about who will still want to be around when they know the real me. So I'm taking that life, like it or not. However, the church really needs to think about what it's doing to the LGBT community. The church bears most of the responsibility for those of us who no longer feel we belong there. We are being shoved out. We have to decide between who we are and what they want us to be. There is no compromise. If we don't want to lose everything we have ever known, we have to conform to their idea of what God wants for us. I won't even go into all of the hypocrisy of the self-proclaimed literalists who only take certain verses literally, because that's not the point here, but just remember that we are not God and cannot presume to know everything perfectly. We are willing to compromise on some issues, but not others. Harding and other communities need to realize what they are doing to people. You can only stuff us into our respective closets for so long. There is only so much a person can take.

--C--

No safe space

The closet is oppressive. It's suffocating. The constant fear of people finding out, wondering who will still love you and who will try to make you miserable is enough to drive any normal person to desperate measures. Harding is that environment. They advertise (about once a year) this Integrity Ministries thing where you can go and, if they accept you, be open with a small group of people. It's nice to have a few people to talk to, but you're still hiding. You're still wondering what teachers, friends, and churches would think. And that's only if they think you're fixable enough to even bother talking to you in the first place. I was told once by a well-meaning higher-up in the HCU community that I could talk to them about anything regarding this issue. Well, unless I'd actually had sex. Then I'd get kicked out. I understand that Harding has rules, but this is not helpful. Now I not only feel as though I can't trust any of my Christian brothers in the Student Life office, but I probably can't trust any of those Harding-paid counselors either! And who knows which professors are safe? Better not say anything on Facebook or Twitter. In fact, you should probably just continue suffocating in that closet of yours. It's safer that way.

One of Harding's Christian Home textbooks discusses the issue briefly. The section includes "research" presented by NATIONAL (National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality). This organization is known to have distorted the research of numerous psychologists. One quote comes from a prominent 1960s researcher. 1960s. If we tried to pass that off as academic in a truly academic institution, we'd be laughed out of the classroom. There is

- BOY HAS TO IDENTIFY WITH FATHER AND DISIDENTIFY WITH MOTHER AT EARLY STAGE
- AT 15-18 MONTHS (GENDER IDENTITY PHASE)
 - MOTHER HAS TO SUPPORT HIS BECOMING A MAN - NOT HOLD BOYS TOO TIGHTLY
 - IF FATHER AND SON BOND- HE WILL NOT MAKE A FANTASY ATTEMPT TO CONNECT WITH THE MASCULINE
- PATHOLOGICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HOMOSEXUALITY:
 - DAD IS DISTANT, GONE, ALCOHOLIC, WON'T BOND WITH A SENSITIVE, NON ATHLETIC SON- OR ARTISTIC SON
 - WHEN DAD COMES HOME FROM WORK IF SON IS HAPPY TO SEE HIM DAD MAKES HIM FEEL HAPPY IF DAD IS AFTERNUNG NO PROBLEMS LIKELY WITH SON BECOMING HOMOSEXUAL
- CERTAIN Signs of Pre Homosexuality
 - REPEATEDLY STATED DESIRE TO BE OTHER SEX OR ACT LIKE OTHER SEX
 - STRONG PREFERENCE FOR CROSS DRESSING OR PRETENDING TO DRESS LIKE OTHER GENDER
 - STRONG AND PERSISTENCE DESIRE FOR OPPOSITE ROLES

SINGLE MOTHERS: CLUB SCOUTS AND MALE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS IS NOT ENOUGH TO HELP A BOY REACH A CLEAR GENDER IDENTITY : THE BOY MUST HAVE ONE SALIENT (GOOD AND STRONG) MAN WHO TAKES A SPECIAL INTEREST IN HIM- ONE MALE GHOOSTS HIM --/MEN: FIND THOSE FATHERLESS BOYS AND WRITE THEM TO GO FISHING. PLAY CATCH WITH HIM - ESPECIALLY THE QUIET BOY IN THE BACKGROUND... THE ONE IN THE BACKGROUND - HE IS THE ONE WE HAVE TO GO AFTER

DAD, TAKE THE BOY OUT OF THE HOUSE JUST YOU AND HE WRESTLE WITH HIM - NEEDS PHYSICALITY - TUCK HIM IN AT NIGHT - TELL HIM STORIES ABOUT YOUR YOUTH - PRAY WITH HIM - TURN THE LIGHT OUT. ENTICE THE BOY AWAY FROM THAT SUPER BOND WITH MOM - COME ON KID, BEING A MAN IS FUN - MOM SHOULD NOT INTERFERE - DON'T GET IN THE WAY OF THE FATHER SON RELATIONSHIP

IMPLICATIONS OF HAVING A SCHOOL COUNSELOR SAY TO CONFUSED KID "YOU MUST ACCEPT THIS- YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THIS WAY - I GUESS YOU HAVE A GAY GEN" - ~~IT~~ DAMAGES KID. GAY WILL BECOME THEIR IDENTITY IF TED, CONFRONTED ON THE NET, ETC. CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS ARE DOING THIS IN KINDERGARTEN. ONLY 2% OF POPULATION IS GAY - BUT IT WILL BECOME 10% BECAUSE SOCIETY IS RAPIDLY LAYING THE FOUNDATION.

PARENTS CAN PREVENT HOMOSEXUALITY - THERE IS A CHOICE - THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO!!! TALK TO YOUR KID - KIDS ARE BEING PRESSURED TO BECOME WHAT WILL CAUSE THEM HORRIBLE PAIN ALL THEIR LIVES



THE GAY REVOLUTION
IS UNDERWAY!

Reflections on the above texts

I WISH I COULD ASSUME THE ABOVE TEXTS AND QUOTATIONS DON'T NEED EXPLANATION OR COMMENTARY BECAUSE OF THEIR ABSURDITY, BUT I'M AFRAID THEY DO. ALMOST ALL THE ABOVE INFORMATION FROM MY YOUTH MINISTER, THERAPIST, AND PROFESSOR BRUMWELD IS COMPLETELY LACKING IN ANY FACT OR REALISTIC THEORETICAL FOUNDATION. THEY DEFY ALL RULES OF SCIENCE, LOGIC, AND ARGUMENT. TO USE DR. BRUMWELD'S WORD, IT IS ALL "JUNK." FROM THE AUTHORS/"SCIENTISTS" THAT THE INFORMATION IS BASED OFF, TO THE TIRED STEREOTYPES AND REPEATEDLY HETEROSEXIST ASSUMPTIONS, IT'S ALL JUNK.

AFTER LEAVING HARDING AND COMING TO AN AUTHENTIC ACADEMIC INSTITUTION I HAVE REALIZED HOW FAULTY MANY OF THESE TEACHINGS ARE. IT'S NO LONGER GOOD ENOUGH TO JUST SAY SOMETHING TO ME THAT MIGHT INITIALLY SEEM LOGICAL. INSTEAD, I NEED PROOF. I NEED THEORY. I NEED PRACTICE, RESEARCH, OR ANYTHING ELSE TO BACK UP YOUR EMPTY CLAIMS.

THE TEACHINGS I HAVE OUTLINED ARE SO COMMON AND SO EASILY ACCEPTED WITHIN THE CHURCH. THESE EXACT TEACHINGS ARE WHAT CAUSED ME TO BE INCREDIBLY DEPRESSED WHILE AT HARDING. THESE EXACT TEACHINGS MADE ME NOT WANT TO EVEN EAT LUNCH OR DINNER IN THE CAFETERIA BECAUSE I WAS PARANOID PEOPLE WERE LOOKING AT ME THINKING, "LOOK AT THAT FAG - DISGUSTING." THESE TEACHINGS ONE DAY GAVE ME THE RANDOM DAYDREAM/THOUGHT THAT I WOULD WALK OUTSIDE MY DORM AND FIND THE WORD FAG SPRAY PAINTED ON MY CAR. THESE TEACHINGS CREATE A CULTURE OF HATE, DISGUST, AND FEAR AMONG NON OUTER FOLKS. THESE TEACHINGS CREATE A CULTURE OF SELF HATRED AND SELF DISGUST AMONG GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE. THESE TEACHINGS ARE UNACCEPTABLE, HARMFUL, AND ABSOLUTELY LACKING IN ANY SORT OF SCIENCE OR METHOD OR THEORY THAT EVERY OTHER CLAIM IN ACADEMIA AND PROFESSIONALISM REQUIRES. JUNK, JUNK, JUNK. JUNK THAT FUCKS PEOPLE UP.

-K

so what's the BIG DEAL?

I often hear people say things like "I'm fine with people being gay, but why do they have to make such a big deal about it?"

It's important for us to make "a big deal" about it because we live in a society that does. It is still too common to hear news stories of people being physically attacked for being LGBTQ. Last fall saw a string of teen suicides across America all related to gay bullying. In some cases the kids weren't even out as gay, just perceived as so by their peers who thought that was a reason to bully them.

Visibility and coming out are important to the queer community because of issues like bullying and human rights. The more people are honest and open about who they are, the more people will realize that we're really not that different from each other. Hopefully, with that realization the bullying and oppression will end.

We don't make a big deal out of it to make you uncomfortable. We don't make a big deal out of it to make ourselves seem special. We don't make a big deal out of it to shove it down your throats.

We make a big deal out of it because it is all to often a matter of life and death. *every*

LEARNING

Is it important to you to have friends you can be open & honest with, friends who you know will support you in all circumstances? I know that's important for me & has been for a long time, especially when I was coming out as gay & during the time I spent at Harding.

This section will explore the need for LGBTQ people to have supportive friends & supportive, safe spaces to exist where they won't feel threatened. We hope from these stories that you'll learn how to be a more supportive & caring ally for all queer folks, including those at Harding.

exposure: the average life of a religious fagot and his pursuit of spirits and sex.

8: Terminator. That is when I knew I was different, somehow, not quite sure how, but different. I was watching the first Terminator. It was the first scene. Kyle Resse walked naked out of a tunnel. I stared at the full view of his ass. My eyes were ensnared at his perfect body. What was this thought? This is nothing like Aladdin and Jasmine or Belle and the Beast. Oh well.

10: We were playing house with friends in the neighborhood. I was dad. I was paired up with Sage. She was nice but I started to cry as we tried to kiss. I didn't want to kiss her. Her brother came over and asked me whom I wanted to marry. I told him that Ryan and I should try to be dads together. He called me a fag, a word I didn't know. Their mom never let me play over at their house again. What did I do wrong?

12: I was downstairs in the church with two other friends. James had something to show us. He pulled out a magazine with nude women. The other guys' eyes were fixated on the girls. I pretended to do the same. I was sure of two things after that day. These pictures were doing something for my friends that it didn't do to me, and that I must never let anyone know.

13: Jeff kissed me. I was his best friend. I didn't know what I was feeling but I wanted to be around him all the time. He got a girlfriend, Kathleen. I hated her but I didn't know why. She never did anything to me. One day Jeff took me in the woods and said that he liked me, like he liked Kathleen. He leaned in a kissed me. I felt more alive in that moment than I had ever felt before. The next day in school, Jeff told the entire locker room that I tried to kiss him

and that I was a Fag. I knew what it meant now. I sat alone in the lunchroom for the rest of middle school. I never had one friend from school. I turned to church.

14: Every Young Man's Battle, the name of the book we were reading in Bible Class. I turned to the back of the book. Homosexuality. I read. It explained all my fears. It named what I never wanted to name before. It said it was a sin against God and Nature. It was clear as day. Spelled out right before my eyes. I was filled with shame and intense guilt. I wanted to die right there before I anyone figured it out. I knew I was going to hell.

16: Winter Fest 2004, Gatlinburg TN. Jeff Walling was speaking. Ricky was sitting next to me. I wanted to touch him all the time. Any touch I could get. I brushed his arm against mine. I made up reason why I had to go into the bathroom as he was taking a shower. He beautiful toned bronzed body made my heart quiver. Jeff Walling was speaking on sexual purity that night. He mentioned that some men even want to sleep with others. IT IS A SIN, he said. THE BIBLE IS CLEAR AND THE WORLD AND SATAN WANT TO LEAD YOU IN THE WAY OF DEATH. I was baptized that night. I had to be saved from Hell. I feared it wouldn't matter. I was already beyond redemption.

17: Brad pulled me in the back of the room. He kissed me. I kissed him back. He unbuttoned my shirt and I pulled his off. He took off my belt and got down on his knees. He took me in his mouth and I came. I punched him in the face. I called him a Faggot and kicked him in his ribs. What had I done? God please save me. Take this away from me and I'll be a slave to you. I'll never do this again. I want you to take me under your wings and rescue me? Rescue me from whom? ME

18: Freshman year at Harding. I met this boy. He was more like a Greek God. His body was hard and I wanted to hug him at every chance. I was his best friend and he was mine.

We spent every waking moment together. He held me tight and I held him tighter. We were inseparable. People jokingly told us we were gay together. I loved hearing that. I never want to leave his side.

19: Three days a week in Harding's Counseling Center. I moved from therapist to therapist trying to find a way out. It was my final act of desperation. The choices were as follow: be saved from my closeted sin or death. I planned it all out. If this failed I would die. I had already

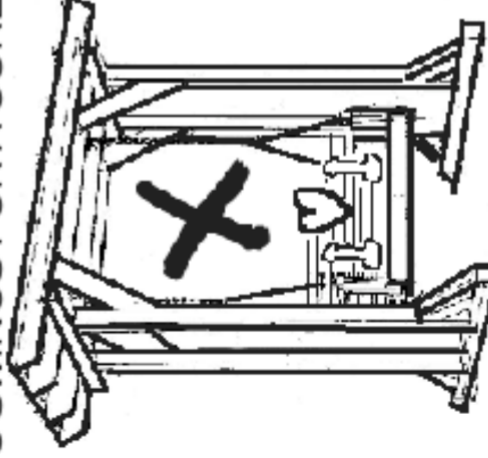
QUEER SPIRITUALITY. OR, ONE OF THE MANY REASONS I'M LACKING IN IT THANKS TO HARDING AND THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

I grew up in a conservative, religious family. My grandfather has been a preacher in the Churches of Christ for as long as I can remember, my father is a deacon, brother a song leader, mother a Sunday School coordinator, etc. For some reason I never really liked church, never really grasped on to the whole God thing. Of course as I grew older I realized this was mostly because I was gay and felt a complete lack of connection with anyone in the church and with the Bible's teachings. Somehow, and I'm still a little unsure how this even happened, I decided in high school to become a Christian and be baptized. Let's just say it was a very strange time in my life. Shortly thereafter I went to Harding, thinking that being in an explicitly Christian community would provide me the answers and safety that I needed to get rid of this gay thing and to become a *true* Christian.

BOY/GIRL WAS I WRONG

3 SWINGS FOR A CURE

Aside from feeling completely unsafe and full of anxiety at Harding because of being gay, perhaps what hurt the most in terms of being able to (safely, confidently) grapple with questions of God and spirituality was Harding's/the Church's/authors'/ teachers' construction of homosexuality as a "struggle" of same-sex attraction/desire. And what I mean by that is this: my identity as a gay man is not a "struggle" of desire or attraction, and I certainly don't need YOU to try and convince me that it is. Listen here. If I'm



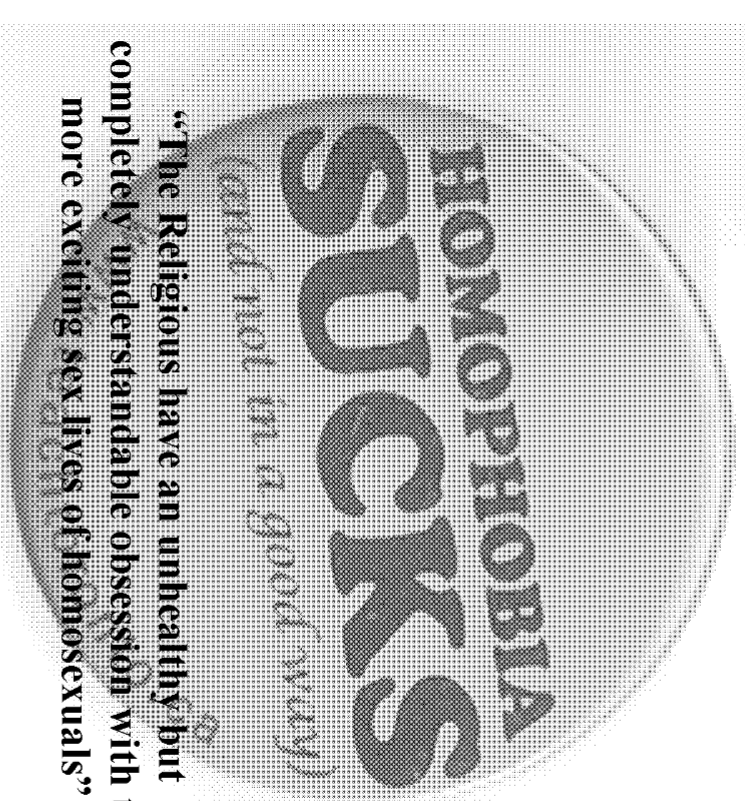
struggling with something I'm more than happy to own up to that and work through it, and I might even ask for your help or advice or support. But until I do, your labeling of my identity and experience as inherently a struggle is incredibly disempowering and strips me of any personal agency. "Struggle" implies the need to overcome. And if my sexual identity turns out to be something that needs conquered and changed, I'll be the first to admit it. Until then, I'm doing just fine, thank you.

-K

arsenokoitai. These two words appeared for the first time in 1958 as homosexuality. Both these words are hard to translate into English from the Greek. Before it was called sodomy. Sodomy was an all-inclusive term that meant "sexual sin" in general. These sins changed with each culture based on their own interpretation what was sexual sin. Sodomy included throughout time: oral sex couples, having sex in the nude, masturbation, sex on Sunday, sex with a woman who was menstruating, and the list goes on. Many Greek scholars think the word Malokois mean effeminate call boys and some English translate it male prostitutes. Arsenokoitai is much more difficult and there is more debate. Some scholars say that they are the customers of the malokois. The Men who bought hair-less boys, as they did for girls, for sex. So these verses are a condemnation of sexual and economic exploitation, particularly of children.

The Biblical authors are silent about homosexual orientation, as we know it today. They do not comment on responsible love between same-sex couples. But we are clear on one thing from the authors and from the mouth of Jesus: We are called to love others, queer or straight.

-- Z



“The Religious have an unhealthy but completely understandable obsession with the more exciting sex lives of homosexuals”

For more information on the Bible, and what it does and doesn't say about homosexuality, please go to soullforce.org.

gotten the gun. It was under my dorm room bed. Would I really end up just like my uncle, dead and exposed for his shame? The Greek God had gotten a girl, Judas. I felt betrayed. I needed help. I needed him. My dreams of love ended as counselors told me I would alone for the rest of my life, but that I should take comfort in God. God has abandoned me. I want to love and be loved by another. Father, Father why have you forsaken me?

20: I was broken. I looked down. I was on my knees in the snow. I couldn't feel my legs. My feet were raw, cold, and beginning to bleed. My heart was beating strikingly slow. I had wondered out of my dorm and into Harding Park. I want the Greek God to find me. Pick me up and hold me. I lay with my face down in the snow. I was cursed with a detestable sin. I didn't ask for this. Take this away, please, I beg you. I'm on my knees in my blood. If my blood cannot atone for my desire, let me know what else to do. Will only death bring me salvation? Fuck you God. You have left me alone, to die here in the snow.

21: I fled to the Middle East. I was bitter and angry with God. I was angry and I wanted answers. I guessed I might find it in the land of the Bible. What I found was Tommy. An Australian. He was flirting with me in a bar. A bar for queers, queens, and transies. We rode bikes along the Sea of Galilee and swam around nude, sorry Jesus. He gave me a book that would change my life. It was an interpretation of scripture like I had never seen before. It showed how the Bible was not as condemning of gay sexuality as I had always heard it. Then he brought me to a minister who was both gay and Christian. I spent hours talking to the both of them. I felt like new life was rushing into me like water rushing into a stream. I over-flowed with joy. I didn't have to compromise my faith to be who I was. I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't ask for this but God had given me a gift; good news for others like me to hear.

22: I felt alive and full of passion. I came out to my friends, my parents, my church. Everyone. I couldn't contain it anymore. It burnt like a fire in my belly. I lost some friends and a lot of respect, but I didn't need it anymore. My closest friends supported me unconditionally. The Truth had set me free. It has opened a new chapter for my life. It is not a neat little package but freedom to doubt, questioning, love, exploration and permission to be weak. I don't have all the answers but I don't need them anymore. Faith is not about answers or strength. Faith is us on our knees, broken, weak and full of questions. Like Jacob at Bethel, we must wrestle with God. When we triumph our name becomes Israel.

-- Z

My Experience at Harding

Let me tell you about myself from before I came to Harding.

When I made the decision to be baptized back in 5th grade, I remember very clearly thinking as we stood for the invitation song, "If I do this now, I have to stop liking boys." That's honestly the only thought I had before I walked down the aisle.

But I very quickly ran into a problem: I didn't stop liking boys. They only got more attractive. I fought with myself for years about it. I can't tell you the number of nights I went to bed *begging* God to give me the strength to change.

Reader, I assure you, I tried. I defy anyone who says that I didn't try hard enough. I prayed, I fasted, I got involved in youth groups of at least 4 different churches. I was a very vocal member in the online community – any time I saw a religious section of a forum, I had the Biblical answers to all of their problems, the worst of which was homosexuality. I even had a couple of girlfriends for a while just because I thought the experiences would help turn me. I wanted nothing more than to stop sinning. Unfortunately, I became a very secretive, angry, emotionally unstable person because I was carrying this terrible burden.

And then, one summer, I realized something that had been said to me in countless Bible classes and sermons: God always answers prayers, but sometimes He says no.

That may sound like blasphemy to you, me saying that God wouldn't help me change so He must be okay with this, but I honestly can't think of any other explanation. And truthfully, that realization brought about a much happier, more satisfied person than had been in the years prior. Not only that, but I was also able to grow a lot spiritually. Christians will often point to lives like mine and say, "Look! Being gay makes you miserable!" But I promise you, the misery didn't come from being gay. The misery came from trying to be straight.

All of that leads to me coming to Harding. I began the coming out process my first semester of freshman year. It was after my first really bad break up – you know, the kind that leaves you miserable for months on end, and none of your friends really want to be around you because you're doing and saying the craziest things... Honestly, if it hadn't happened, I wonder

poor and inhospitality toward the foreigner. Sodomites are the people who build bigger homes, buy better cars and forsake their needy brothers and sisters. The rape in the story is a historical act common to the time. It was common for thieves and bullies to assert power over their "enemies", in this case the angels, by raping them. This was a dehumanizing act about control and power, not about sexual orientation.

The two biggest passages that are used unfairly towards homosexuality are found in Leviticus and Romans. Let's take Leviticus first. Leviticus says that "it is an abomination for a man to lie with another man, his blood should be upon him" (20:13). Leviticus was a holiness code for only the priests of Israel to follow. It included prohibitions against round hair cuts, tattoos, working on the Sabbath, wearing garments of mixed fabrics, and eating pork. (Oh, not the bacon!) It was an abomination to do any of these things. It was an abomination to eat pork and to sleep with men. The Hebrew word *TO'EBAH* (abomination in English) means something customarily offensive in a certain time, place, and for certain people. In this case a priest in ancient Israel. But why was gay sex seen as an abomination? The Jews were a small nation trying to populate a country. They had many enemies and were outnumbered. Any act that was seen as wasting a seed (it was believed that only the male sperm had what made a child, the woman was just an incubator) was seen as wrong. So masturbation and pulling out of the vagina before ejaculation and homosexuality was seen as a sin.

Now for Romans 1:26-27. Paul describes non-Jewish women who "exchange natural use for unnatural" and non-Jewish men who "lust for one another" and leave the natural use of women, working shame with each other". Pretty clear right? Homo sex is wrong. Let's look at this more closely. Paul is writing this letter to Rome after his missionary tour of the Mediterranean. On his journey Paul had seen great temples built to honor Aphrodite, Diana, and other fertility gods and goddesses of sex and passion instead of the one true God the apostle honors. Apparently, these priest and priestesses engaged in some odd sexual behaviors - including castrating themselves, drunken orgies, and having sex with temple prostitutes both male and female, all to honor the gods of sex and pleasure. There is nothing wrong with pleasure, even sexual pleasure, but when we are out of control and live (worship) for pleasure, then that becomes our God. We are now serving the gods of sex and pleasure. This story is not about homosexuality as same-sex committed couples. It is a story about God and his desire to be our only God. It is a story about the danger of idolatry.

The only other place in the New Testament that might seem as though it condemns homosexuality is in a list of sin in 1st Corinthians 6:9 and 1st Timothy 1:10. In a list of sins Paul includes fornication, theft, idolatry, witchcraft, whoring, drunkenness. He also includes *malokois* and

Many good people build their case against homosexuality almost entirely on the Bible. These folks value scripture and are serious about seeking its guidance in their lives. Unfortunately, many have never really studied what the Bible does and doesn't say about homosexuality. We gay and lesbian Christians take the Bible seriously, too. People, both gay and straight, are figuring out there are flaws in the old paradigm of understanding biblical sexual ethics, including homosexuality. I'm convinced the Bible has a powerful message for queer Christians as well for straight Christians. But it's not the message of condemnation we so often hear.

We must be open to new truth from Scripture. Many faithful followers of Christ and the church as a whole have changed their minds on issues. It took a sheet lowered from the sky with animals in it for Peter to see new truths about Jewish law. The church use to defend slavery using scripture, now that thought is unacceptable. Even if we think the Bible is infallible, it is dangerous to think that our understanding is without fault.

The Bible is a text about God, not a handbook on sexuality. It is a story about a God and his love for his people. It was never intended to be a book about sexuality. Certainly it has something to teach us about love and commitment but not about orientation. In fact, the Bible accepts sexual practices that we condemn and condemns practices that we accept. According to the Deuteronomy if a bride is not a virgin she should be stoned (22:13-21) and Leviticus forbids a married couple to have sex when the woman is having her period (18:19). Mark says that if a husband dies without a child the wife must sleep with his brothers until a child is born (12:18-27). We certainly do not agree with these sexual ethics. The Bible also says that prostitution is legal for men but not women and many of our greatest heroes of the Bible had more than one wife. Traditional marriage as the evangelical right would like to force on everyone doesn't even exist in the Bible. Jesus and Paul never married, Abraham fathered children with women other than his wife, and Jacob married both Rachel and Leah.

We miss the power of the stories if we are debating what they "say" about sex. "It's about Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." I hear often this claim against same-sex. The power of this story is just as true for Adam and Eve as Adam and Steve. It a story about how God created the world and it was good. Some want to suggest that because this story says it was natural that a man and a woman come together to create life that homosexuality must be unnatural. What does this say about other people who cannot produce children: single men and women, couples that cannot bear children, older couples, or ones that chose not to have kids? Or the story of Sodom. We know the sin of Sodom and it was not gay sex-crazed men. Ezekiel 16:48-49 tells us that the sin of Sodom was injustice to the

how long it would have been until I came out more. I came out to a friend who had sort of dropped hints that she was okay with it. That was December. I didn't come out to anyone else until May, and after that, probably December again.

Needless to say, I'm extremely careful about coming out. In my mind, the worst thing that could happen would be the other person putting on a pathetic face, saying the words, "I'll pray for you..." and then never speaking to me again. I don't want to be prayed for. I appreciate that you want for me to be straight, and that you want it for me so much that you'll take it to God. But as I saw it a few years ago, no one on earth could have wanted it more than me. Surely God would answer the prayer of the person who wanted it answered most, and I prayed about it for *years*.

Being gay is always tough in the kind of environment where you're not 100% sure whether the person you're coming out to will accept you, pity you, or report you. You learn how to bring up your private life – either with changed pronouns or not at all. I don't know whether I'll be able to keep some of the friends I've made while at Harding simply because they'll never get to know the real me.

If there's anything I need right now, it's to know that my fellow students don't hate me. We need it. We need people who aren't afraid to say that they'll love us no matter what. We're in a place that hides us behind lies (an action that we're supposed to fight against as Christians, I think). We're scared that our peers will abandon and shun us, scared that our college experience is going to be horrendous and miserable, *scared*, if for no other reason, that we'll be forced to choose between being with someone we genuinely love and doomed to spend an eternity in hell, or choose to be with Christ, but be alone and miserable for the rest of our life on earth.

That's what life in the church, life at Harding has taught me, reader. I tried for years to be just like you and I failed, and my brothers and sisters in Christ have taught me that that means I must live alone for the rest of my life. I am to remain celibate – no, even farther, I am to become asexual, because even my desire to be with a man dooms my soul to hell. I am to delicately avoid the questions "Do you have a girlfriend?" and "When are you getting married?" until I'm put in a nursing home – put there by my siblings or nieces and nephews, rather than the children I can never have. My brothers and sisters have taught me that that is my fate, and until I hear otherwise from the ones who will love me, I must assume that you all feel this way.

And that is why we must hide. That is why we need you.



Sodom and...Gibeah

(I wanted to quote Genesis 19:1-11, but it's too long, so. Go get your Bible. I'm going to reference that passage some.)

Ah, Sodom...The perfect go-to example for Christians who stand against homosexuality: a story of a town full of nothing but homosexuals who immediately burn for their lustful desires... Because that's what it is, right?

I won't say that it's not. But I will point out these things:

Can we agree that at least one sin of sexual immorality at Sodom was gang rape? I mean, forget for a moment about the gay sex. Gang rape is sexually immoral, yes? If we can agree, I'd like to point out that the motivations of rape are more commonly associated with anger or power and control than sexual satisfaction. Tell me if this sounds reasonable - would a haughty people (Ezekiel 16:50) think that they had so much power that they would want to prove they have control over *any* visitor that stopped by?

Speaking of sexual satisfaction, isn't it strange that Sodom was the only city in the history of the world to produce an entire population of homosexuals? Even today, in the liberal culture you're living in, the highest percentage of LGBTQ people in a metropolis is about 15%. Couldn't it be possible that most, if not all, of the men were, in fact, straight? They had young and old men. It's totally possible that some of the old men were the fathers of the young men, suggesting that they'd had at least one sexual encounter with a woman...right? Forget about the fact that these angels took the form of men. If they had been women, do you think the situation would have turned out any differently? Consider the eerily-similar story of Gibeah (Judges 19) before you answer.

And what about the angels? Hypothetically speaking, if you had a group of men trying to break into your house and your options for appeasing these men are your two virgin daughters or spiritual beings sent to you from God, which would *you* offer up first?

Most importantly, look at Lot's *reason* for keeping the men from the angels in verse 8: "Only do nothing to these men, *for they have come under the shelter of my roof*." Incidentally, it's the very same reason given in the Gibeah account. Isn't that strange? He begs the men not to do that wicked deed (which he knows is wicked, v.7) to the angels not because they're *men*, but because they're *guests*. Wouldn't Lot cry out against the wickedness of gay sex over the fact that he's got company?

But, no, I won't say that the story isn't about God judging a city of gays.